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Ex-post evaluation of the preparatory action "Your first EURES job"

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ‘Your first EURES job’ preparatory action (YFEJ) was implemented for three consecutive budget years (2011-2013) with an overall EU budget of around EUR 12 million. The last wave of projects finished in September 2015. The scheme aimed to help young EU citizens aged 18-30 to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another EU country and employers (SMEs¹ in particular) to find the right people to fill their vacancies. It combined tailor-made recruitment, matching and placement services with financial support to the target groups and was therefore considered a ‘targeted job mobility scheme’. The scheme’s name refers to EURES because YFEJ was meant to complement and strengthen the recruitment, job matching and placement support provided by the EURES network.² There were 4251 placements made under the preparatory action against a target of 5000, equating to 85%, with an EU budget expenditure of around EUR 7.7 million, which equates to 63 % of the total available EU budget.

An ex-post evaluation is due in order to comply with the Financial Regulation applicable to the EU budget (Article 18 §3 of the Rules of Application). This staff working document evaluates the performance of the preparatory action. It highlights what has worked well and less well. It identifies the main challenges and draws conclusions for possible future EU interventions in the field, including planned 2018 and 2019 calls for proposals on targeted mobility schemes Your First EURES Job and Reactivate.

The evaluation was built around the following evaluation criteria: **relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, organisation and governance, complementarity and EU added value.**

The evaluation finds that the internal logic, **coherence** and **relevance** of the YFEJ preparatory action can be judged as sound and compliant with the action’s objectives to reduce barriers to mobility, provide more job opportunities, and help match young people to placements. The preparatory action was also coherent with other EU mobility interventions in the sense of not duplicating or overlapping with them, though the degree of coherence with other schemes at Member State level was less apparent.

From the perspective of **effectiveness**, assessing the relative success of the action is difficult due to the lack of sufficiently similar and reliable benchmark data. The evaluation concludes that the performance of individual projects varied significantly, suggesting that effectiveness was variable across the action as a whole. Several factors contributed to this variation, such as provider type, extent of pre-existing relationships, approach to design, and resourcing.

In terms of **efficiency**, the evaluation finds that the cost of the preparatory action was outweighed by the economic/financial benefits for participating individuals and businesses (and ultimately the economy). The average cost to the EU budget per placement was estimated at EUR 1 822 EUR. This amount is far lower than amounts mapped in other EU or national mobility schemes mainly because support measures were tailored to the participants’ needs and had a shorter duration than in other schemes. While all implementation costs for the projects under the scheme and the benefits for individuals and employers could not be

¹ SMEs — small and medium-sized enterprises, with up to 250 employees.

² More information on the EURES network and services is available at <http://eures.europa.eu>.

precisely quantified, based on the available evidence an estimated € 8.5 million of action costs can be placed against potential additional benefits of around € 38 million. As with effectiveness, efficiency varied at the level of individual projects. A more efficient provision of services would likely depend on increased scale and longevity of projects.

The evidence indicates that YFEJ had a generally positive **impact** on participating individuals, helping in many cases to reduce obstacles to their mobility and match them to sustainable employment opportunities. However, there will also have been some deadweight in that a notable minority of individuals would have become mobile and found jobs without the scheme. This was also evident from the online survey, as it indicated that a significant proportion of those supported may already have had experience of working abroad prior to the support. The impacts for employers and providers are likely to have been more mixed, though still overall positive, with benefits (financial support for the integration of recruited workers) to some extent undermined by resource costs involved in taking part in the scheme (from recruitment to the placement phase).

There were good indications that in many cases the positive impacts stemming from the support provided by YFEJ continued to exist beyond the project's lifespan for both individuals and to a lesser extent for the employers. For the projects themselves, there was some good evidence of sustained positive effects in terms of organisational learning and partnership development, though not universally. Some projects have continued thanks to other funding sources, while for others there was little evidence of such sustainability. As to the sustainability of the placements, in the absence of long-term tracking of the action's impact and results, there is only anecdotal and indicative evidence of both individuals and employers being interested in prolonging the contract.

The outcome of the preparatory action in terms of **organisation and governance** was broadly positive, in spite of some notable differences between the degree of effectiveness in the internal organisation of service providers, functioning of partnerships and perception of administrative requirements across projects.

The preparatory action generated **added value** in respect of other EU programmes or schemes on mobility in place at the time of its operation (e.g. Erasmus+), by being the only dedicated pan-European approach to supporting intra-EU job mobility. The degree of **complementarity** achieved by the action was good with existing EURES network services but complementarity with national schemes was weaker.

The evaluation concludes that, in general, the YFEJ preparatory action has achieved its immediate and specific objectives to a good degree. However, at the level of wider impacts around labour market functioning and skills matching, a much larger intervention would be required to have any significant effect. Moreover, irrespective of the size of an intervention, impacts in relation to skills shortages and bottleneck vacancies are difficult to achieve given the dynamic and continuously fluctuating nature of labour markets.

YFEJ is being continued as a targeted mobility scheme under the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) for the 2014-2020 period and the results of this evaluation will have implications for future possible EU actions in the field of youth labour mobility.